# YOUTH READY BY 21

*A Five-Year Action Agenda for Maryland*

**Presented to the Children's Cabinet by the Ready by 21 Planning Team**

**October 2007**

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Ready by 21™ Action Planning Team is focused on Maryland youth transitioning from adolescence to adulthood. The Ready by 21 Action Planning Team included more than thirty representatives from state and local government, businesses, advocates, private nonprofit service providers and higher education to focus on ensuring all 309,000 Maryland youth ages 18-21 years old are ready for the responsibilities of life, including work and a career or further education and training.

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# OVERVIEW

The vision of the Children's Cabinet is that all children will be successful in life. In 2000, the Children's Cabinet focused its efforts on increasing the number of children entering school ready to learn. The Maryland Early Child Care and Education Committee (ECE) demonstrated how interagency collaboration and coordination can impact children's lives in Maryland.

Following the lead of the ECE, the Ready by 21 Action Planning Team is dedicated to improving the odds for Maryland's older youth. This team included more than thirty representatives from state and local government, businesses, advocates, private nonprofit service providers and higher education who came together to focus on ensuring all 309,000 Maryland youth ages 18-21 years old are ready for work and a career or further education and training (National Center for Health Statistics, 2005). The team began working together in October 2006, when Maryland's Children's Cabinet in partnership with the Annie E Casey Foundation and the Forum for Youth Investment, launched the Youth Ready by 21 Leadership in Action Program (YLAP) with a two-pronged approach to:

- Accelerate the rate at which Maryland's youth are ready for continued learning, work and life by age 21, and
- Increase the leadership capacity of the people who are accountable for this result.

The Ready by 21 Action Planning Team grew out of the work of the YLAP. With the support of the Forum for Youth Investment and the Governor's Office for Children, the team worked intensively throughout the summer of 2007 to develop the strategies and action steps set forth in this plan. While the focus of these strategies and action steps is on preparing 18-21 year olds for success, it must be noted that to ensure this goal is achieved, the planning team agreed to include efforts that need to be directed at younger adolescents, before they reach the age of 18.

In Maryland, there are many agencies, organizations, task forces and coalitions focused on various pieces of the puzzle needed to ensure that all youth are ready for adulthood. While aiming for similar ultimate goals, these groups are often working in parallel and occasionally at cross purposes due to funding streams and grant restrictions. Borrowing from the Forum for Youth Investment's "Ready by 21" framework, the Children's Cabinet asked that the various stakeholders be brought together to work on the overarching result that "All of Maryland's 309,000 youth age 18-21 are Ready for College, Work and Life." To tackle such an overarching goal, group members were challenged to join a process that focused on their own leadership development (through the Maryland Leadership in Action Program) as well as integrated two tested approaches for identifying and achieving results for children and youth – the Fiscal Policy Studies Institute's Results Accountability framework (Friedman, 2005) and the Forum for Youth Investment's Big Picture Approach. As the Forum for Youth Investment worked with Maryland's Ready by 21 Action Team to develop this Action Agenda, they also shared examples and information from other states that have tackled comprehensive youth agendas or worked to align policies on behalf of youth. Best and promising practices regarding youth development were reviewed for inclusion in the strategies and action steps.

The Ready by 21 Action Agenda is comprehensive in scope and built on a holistic assessment regarding the needs of Maryland's young adults. In developing this agenda, the touchstone has been to focus on a big picture result for all of Maryland's youth – that they are ready for college, work and life by age 21.

The group debated at length specific measures that could be used to track progress towards this result. In identifying a specific slate of indicators, they referred to the Forum's Ready by 21 framework that encourages a balance of goals (preparation as well as problem reduction) across a range of

developmental areas (learning, working, thriving, connecting, leading). They also used three lenses from Results Accountability, asking if the indicators have (Friedman, 2005):

- good proxy power – if these are improving, are other related indicators likely to be improving as well;
- good data power – is there timely and reliable data for the indicator and, of additional concern for this group, is the indicator tracked at the county or city level as well as the state level; and
- good communications power – can the general public understand why these indicators are important.

After much discussion, the group adopted six indicators that they thought, when taken together, would serve as good markers for the overall goal of being ready by 21. These indicators, discussed at greater length in the following section, are: educational attainment; employment/ unemployment; healthcare access; HIV/AIDS incidence; arrest rates; and death by murder, suicide or accident.

The group then explored the underlying causes – or "contributing factors" – that made a difference in each of these indicators. Not surprisingly, they found that these factors clustered into several overarching themes, which they shaped into seven goal areas:

1. All Marylanders will understand the urgency of providing supportive services and resources, are aware of existing gaps, and are supportive of investments that will improve the odds for youth to be Ready by 21.
2. All Maryland's youth, especially older youth (14+), will have the support of capable, competent and caring adults.
3. All Maryland's transition-aged youth, with an emphasis on youth transitioning out of public systems, will have access to safe and affordable housing that is convenient to services, supports, transportation, schools, employment and other youth.
4. All Maryland's youth, especially transition-aged youth, will receive necessary supports to ensure health and well being.
5. All Maryland's youth, with an emphasis on vulnerable youth, will be prepared to successfully transition into post secondary education, advanced training and the workforce.
6. Maryland's social service and juvenile service systems will treat all young people equally and fairly.
7. Maryland will have an infrastructure that promotes, sufficiently funds and is held accountable for the preparedness of transition-aged youth for college, work and life.

The bulk of this Action Agenda is structured around these seven goal areas, outlining specific strategies and action steps needed to achieve each goal. The Action Agenda begins, however, by asking a basic question – why focus on transition-aged youth? This is followed by a brief exploration of the current reality in Maryland as well as highlights of progress already being made, setting the stage for the specific goals, strategies and actions that follow.

Why is this Action Agenda being created in a state fiscal climate that is currently experiencing challenges? The members of the planning team acknowledged the current fiscal environment throughout the planning process and worked hard to identify strategies and action steps that would be low cost/no cost in implementation. Other strategies and action steps have a considerably higher cost and will require additional planning and resources to implement. Although there are limited resources within state government, this Action Agenda is designed to look outside of government and focus the parallel efforts and resources of many partners: local government, businesses, community, non-profit organizations, foundations, advocates, youth, and families to achieve a common result: all youth ready for college, work and life.

# YOUTH READY BY 21

*A 5-Year Action Agenda for Maryland*

## WHY FOCUS ON TRANSITION-AGED YOUTH?

Things have changed over the years for our nation's young adults - becoming an adult does not happen all at once. The passage from adolescence to adulthood has become extended and the transition is now more complex and complicated than ever before in our nation's history (Osgood, et al, 2005).

In Maryland, many of our 18-21 year olds make the transition to young adulthood successfully and pursue a productive satisfying future through education or employment. **But 13% of Maryland's 18-24 year olds are "idle" – they are not working, not attending school and have no degree beyond high school** (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2006). "Idle youth" are defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as young people who: (1) are not presently enrolled in school; (2) are not currently working; and (3) have no degree beyond a high school diploma or GED. This measure reflects those young adults who are considered having difficulty navigating what most would consider a successful transition to adulthood. Idle young adults may drift with minimal contributions to community life and may be more likely to experience incarceration, non-marital pregnancy, alcohol and drug dependence and may seek assistance from the adult public welfare system.

*Nationally, 3.8 million 18–24 year olds are neither in school nor in the workforce — almost one in six. Several research studies suggest that a small number of these young adults have opted out of school and work in order to start families or see the world. Most, however, are on the sidelines because they are ill-prepared for college or work or life.*

***-Edelman, et al, 2006 & Besharov, 1999***

Over the past few years, there has been a growing demand from Maryland's educators, service providers and businesses to address the unmet needs of our youth transitioning to adulthood. In January 2006, the Governor's Office for Children convened representatives of various stakeholder groups from around the state. These representatives raised concerns about the current situation of 18-21 year olds in Maryland. Some of their concerns were (Report on the Stakeholder's Consensus Planning Day, 2006):

- "A large percentage of all youth are not ready for work, college or daily living responsibilities."
- "Many youth who are transitioning to adulthood are vulnerable for poor outcomes, but there is a lack of indicator data concerning transition-aged youth."
- "The responsibility for youth involved in the public service system ends at different ages."
- "Many of these youth do not have parental involvement or agency involvement."

As this group noted, while all youth need supports on the pathway to adulthood, youth transitioning out of child serving systems need extra assistance in order to successfully navigate this path. According to the 2007 Maryland State Resource

Plan, there were 2,397 youth ages 18-21 in out-of-home placements, representing approximately 20% of youth in out-of-home placements (State Resource Plan, 2007). As noted, older youth already in the child-serving systems prior to their 18th birthday may continue to receive services from the system, but the provisions vary. For a variety of reasons, the departments use the following guidelines:

- Children can continue to receive services from Department of Human Resources until their 21st birthday, as long as they agree to continue to receive services, and as long as they are engaged in school, work, or vocational educational programs.
- Children may remain in Department of Juvenile Services custody through age 21 at the discretion of the judge and master involved in the case.
- The Developmental Disabilities Administration may serve youth eligible for the Governor's Transitioning Youth Initiative up to their 22nd birthday.
- The Maryland State Department of Education will allow youth with an Individual Educational Program to complete the school year in which they turn 21.
- Mental Health Administration services provided through medical assistance are available to all individuals who meet medical necessity criteria.

A number of Maryland's children served in out-of-home placement are in the public system and will soon be transitioning to adulthood. It is vital that we address their particular needs and provide support to ensure this transition is successful.

**21st Century Skills & Content**

*Information & Media Literacy*

*Communication*

*Critical & Systems Thinking*

*Problem Solving*

*Creativity, Intellectual Curiosity*

*Interpersonal Skills*

*Self-Direction*

*Accountability and Adaptability*

*Social Responsibility*

*Financial Literacy*

*Global Awareness*

*Civic Literacy*

***-The Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2006***

**What do youth need to be Ready by 21?**

While there is no one comprehensive assessment of "readiness" for adulthood, plenty of information points to what young people need to succeed in today's economy. Reports from higher education, business, and youth development leaders suggest that while the pathways to college (or some form of postsecondary education), work and adult responsibilities are different, the skills needed are largely the same. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills has identified discreet skills and content areas that are needed (see sidebar on 21st Century Skills). Research studies and population surveys, however, suggest that too few young people have the skills needed to succeed (Gambone, et al, 2002).

A National research synthesis conducted by Michelle Gambone and associates estimated that 43% of young people are doing well by their early 20's but that 22% are having difficulty (Gambone, et al, 2002). With categories that track closely with the goals of being ready for college, work and life, Gambone and colleagues developed basic definitions of when young people are productive (via college or work) as well as healthy and connected (two "life" categories).

The threshold for "doing well" is that young people are doing well in two or more areas and ok in the third. Specifically, as Gambone discovered, those young people doing well are:

- **Productive –** Attending college or working steadily
- **Healthy** – Have good health, health habits, healthy relationships
- **Connected** – Volunteering, politically active, active in religious institutions, community

At the opposite end of the spectrum, the 22% who were having difficulty were doing poorly in two areas and not well in any. In each area, doing poorly was defined as:

- **Unproductive** – High School diploma or less, unemployed, or on welfare
- **Unhealthy** – Have poor health, poor health habits, unsupportive relationships
- **Disconnected** – Committing an illegal activity about once a month

Gambone's research also underscores a key point that was explored by the Ready by 21 Action Planning Team – for young people to be ready, the supports that they receive need to be early and sustained. Gambone and her colleagues found that young people who received needed supports as they were entering high school were much more likely to leave high school "ready." One example is that **young people who had caring adults in their lives were five times more likely to leave high school ready. And those young people who left high school ready were four times more likely to be doing well in their early 20's.**

Although their work focused on changing the odds for young people ages 18-21, the Ready by 21 Action Planning Team found that many of their recommendations needed to start with an earlier age group, with young people entering high school. They also found that the goal was not just for young people to be "ready" for college and work, but that there be educational and employment opportunities available for them. With this in mind, many recommendations extend beyond age 21, as well.

**Maryland must ensure that all 309,000 Marylanders ages 18-21 years old are ready for college, work and life.**

Currently in Maryland there is no one clear measure to determine if young people are ready, but several different indicators give us glimpses into their current situation.

Building on the Forum's Ready by 21 framework that encourages a balance of goals (preparation as well as problem reduction) across the areas of learning, work and life, the Ready by 21 Action Planning Team worked hard to develop a slate of indicators that captured the overall goal of "readiness." Given the range of possible "prevention" indicators – from teen pregnancy to drug use to smoking and alcohol abuse – they focused on selecting a few that could serve as "proxies" for the others and had data available at the local level.

*"We need capable adults!"*

*"My brother's in DJS and the only adults he sees are police officers. He needs adults that care to help him. They need more mentors for kids in DJS."*

*"My roommate had a good relationship with her Probation Officer – she had built up incentives and had earned going home privileges but then she got a new Probation Officer who said that she couldn't go home. My roommate was devastated."*

*"They need to craft programs around older youths' interests – bring in adults in the same field of interest and partner them with youth."*

*"They need to increase training for people who care for us – foster parents, youth workers – and show them how to connect with kids."*

***–Focus Group Members, 2007***

If forced to choose just one indicator to capture overall "readiness," the "idle youth" indicator introduced on page one is a good proxy. However, it is only available at the state level, as this is federal census data and difficult to track locally. The following indicators were identified as a focused slate for tracking progress locally and statewide.

*The Urban Institute and the Harvard Civil Rights Project estimate that 32 percent of ninth graders do not graduate from high school on time. Seventy-five percent of white students graduate on time but only half of African American, Hispanic and Native American students do so.*

***– Orfield, et al, 2004***

**Ready for College**

- Educational Attainment – An increase in the percentage of youth classified by the highest degree or highest level of school completed.

**Ready for Work**

- Employment – An increase in the percentage of youth employed in the civilian labor force.

**Ready for Life**

- Healthcare – A decrease in the percentage of youth in Maryland aged 19-24 who have no health care coverage.
- HIV/AIDS – A decrease in the percentage of youth that are infected with HIV or AIDS.
- Arrest Rate – A decrease in the number and rate of arrests of youth ages 18-21 for violent, non-violent and drug offenses.
- Rate of deaths – A decrease in the percentage of youth in Maryland who die by murder, suicide and injury.

*A TALE OF TWO YOUTH*

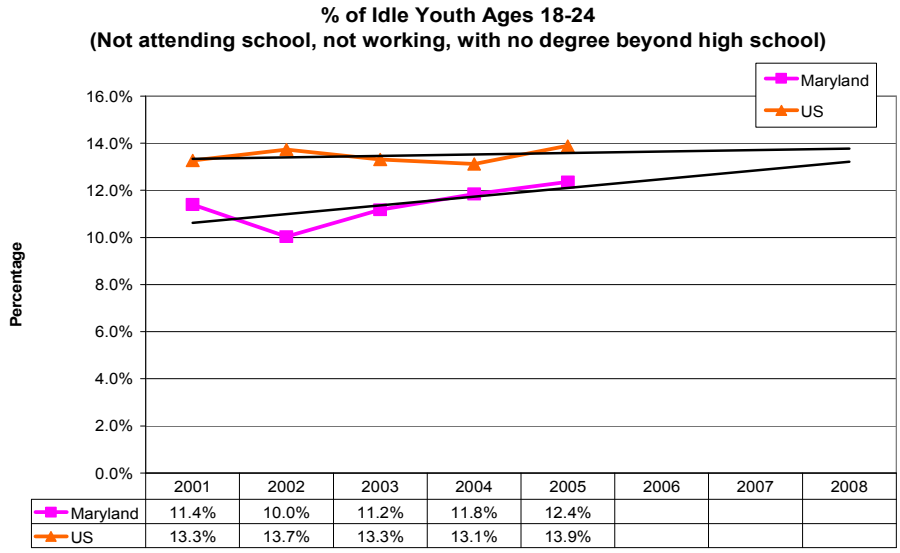
*"Jake" will age out of the system in September 2007. He was originally brought into Department of Social Services because of alleged abuse at the age of 17. He was sleeping on the streets, barely attended school and wasn't employed. Upon entering care, he seems to have had his life turned around. He was linked with the educational and mental health resources (many of which he refused), had a supportive foster home and had begun attending school on a regular basis. After high school Jake got into drugs, and didn't maintain a stable residence or job. He is approaching emancipation and does not have appropriate referrals or plans that are made possible by caring adult relationships.*

*"Mike" will be emancipated from the Department of Social Services in a few months. He was supported with educational, mental and financial resources and he took advantage of them all. He attends community college and will graduate within a year. He is living with a foster parent who has agreed to let him stay after he emancipates. He works part-time and has a savings account. He is actively participating in life skills classes offered at the department and has even done a few outside activities.*

*– Prince George's County Department of Social Services*

## WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Maryland ranks 12th best in the United States for the number of 18-24 year olds not attending school, not working and with no degree beyond high school. Although Maryland's young adults are doing better than the national average, the number of "idle youth" has been increasing since 2001. This measure indicates that an estimated **65,000 young adults** in Maryland are having difficulty navigating a successful transition to adulthood (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2007).




| | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Maryland | 11.4% | 10.0% | 11.2% | 11.8% | 12.4% | | | |
| US | 13.3% | 13.7% | 13.3% | 13.1% | 13.9% | | | |

Source: 2007 KidsCount Data Book (www.kidscount.org)and U.S Census Bureau Table 2: Annual Estimates of the Population by Age and Sex for Maryland: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2006

*Up to a fourth of all students at four-year colleges do not return for their second year of school. And the dropout rates are particularly high for African American, Hispanic and first-generation college students. According to national studies, as many as 30 percent of students will take at least one remedial class during their college years.*

***– ACT Policy Brief, 2004***

The Ready by 21 Action Planning Team spoke with many young people and heard clearly from the youth participating in the planning process that even young people with many supports just do not feel "ready." Taking a look at the slate of indicators chosen by the Ready by 21 Action Planning Team, what does the current reality look like?

**A Balanced Set of Indicators.** As noted, the Ready by 21 Action Planning Team worked to identify a slate of indicators that would tell a story – a basic view of what every young person should have along with a sense of what barriers to avoid. Although the focus of this initiative is on 18-21 year olds, please note that the age ranges reflected in the data sources vary according to the data source. Brief snapshots of the data follow.

***What every young person should have . . .***

**Educational Attainment.** Thirteen percent of those 18-24 years of age have graduated with a bachelor's degree or higher. Another 35% of those in the same age group have some college or an associate's degree. In today's workplace, "nearly half" (48%) is not good enough (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005). The percentage of youth 18-24 years old whose highest educational achievement included less than a high school diploma in Maryland is 17%.

- *In 2005, nine percent of Maryland's high school students attempted suicide and 17% of Maryland students seriously considered attempting suicide during the prior 12 months.*
- *The percentage of female students who attempted suicide is twice the rate for male students.*
- *Suicide attempts are highest in ninth grade so prevention at even earlier ages is critical.*

***– 2005 Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey (a self report questionnaire)***

For those older than 24 years of age the median earnings for a male with a bachelor's degree in Maryland is $62,046 compared to $26,244 for those who do not have a high school diploma. Likewise, females in Maryland with a Bachelor's degree show a median earnings of $42,706 compared to $16,991 for those who do not have a high school diploma. Even with a high school diploma, median earnings are far below a bachelor's degree with males earning $36,942 and females earning $24,892 (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2004 and 2005).

- **Employment**. More than 88% of Maryland's 20-24 year olds in the civilian workforce are employed. That is, of those youth in this age group who make up the civilian workforce – those who are either working full or part-time (employed) or who are available for and actively seeking work (unemployed) – just over 88% were successfully employed. However, this number has been slowly decreasing since 2000, and, as noted above, compensation varies widely depending on educational levels. In addition, according to the most recent data available (2004 and 2005), whites (7.9%) and Hispanics (5.7%) fall below the two-year average unemployment rate for this age group (11.5%) while Blacks (19.8%) well exceed this average despite showing the largest decline between 2004 and 2005 (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2004 and 2005).
- **Healthcare.** Seventy-four percent of Maryland's 19-24 year olds have health care, but an estimated 26% are uninsured, according to the Maryland Health Care Commission (Maryland Health Care Commission, 2005). The number of insured young people has remained relatively steady since 2001.

***Plus major barriers to successful adulthood . . .***

- **Arrest Rate.** Approximately seven percent of 18-21 year olds were arrested in 2005 (including possible repeat offenders) – of those arrests, 59% were for drug offenses. Arrest rates have declined only slightly since 2001.
- **HIV/AIDS.** Since 2001, HIV diagnoses have been on the rise among 13-24 year olds in Maryland (AIDS Administration, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 2005). HIV diagnosis among 13-24 year olds surpassed the rate for 25-29 year olds in 2002 for the first time since 1994. Both age groups are trending up.
- **Rate of Deaths** (death by murder, suicide, accident). While the rate of death by accident among 10-19 year olds has been decreasing and homicide and suicide rates statewide have remained steady, there is cause for concern (Vital Statistics Administration, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 2005). After a few years of declines, Prince George's County has seen an increase in the number of deaths of youth ages 10-19 due to homicide, with the greatest number of deaths in 2005 (23) since 1997. Baltimore City has continued to experience a decline in the number of deaths of youth ages 10-19 due to homicide, with the fewest number of deaths (35) in 2005 since 1991. However, Baltimore City still accounts for 44% of all homicides of youth ages 10-19 in the state.

While these six indicators cannot tell the full story of young people in the state of Maryland, they were selected not only because they have proxy power, helping us understand the big picture of how young people are doing, but also because each of these indicators can be broken down so that we can understand the story at the local level.

As of July 10, 2007, additional data for the state of Maryland and 16 local jurisdictions – 15 counties and Baltimore City – are now available from the 2005 American Community Survey through the Census (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2005). This data tells us that:

- Twenty percent or more of the 18-24 year olds in Baltimore City, Prince George's County and St. Mary's County are not high school graduates.
- For those jurisdictions where data are available, Howard County (at 20%) and Montgomery County (at 19%) have the highest numbers of 18-24 year olds in the state with a bachelor's degree or higher.
- Again, for those jurisdictions where data are available, Allegany County (at 21%) and Baltimore City (at 17%) have the highest unemployment rates among 20-24 year olds.

*"Troubled teens are not going to school and are on the streets. They need to have a place instead of school that they can go to and get their education. Like a place they feel comfortable."*

***– Focus Group Member, 2007***

**What Explains Our Current Situation? (What are the Contributing Factors?)**

Why is it that so many of our young people in Maryland are not making a smooth transition to adulthood when we have the highest median household income in the country for 2006? What, in the parlance of Mark Friedman's Results Accountability Framework, is "the story behind" these specific indicators? "Many processes skip this step and go directly to talking about action," according to Friedman. "This is like a doctor prescribing medicine before diagnosing the disease. In medicine, the proper sequence is diagnosis before treatment. In Results Accountability, it's story before action" (Friedman, 2005).

The Ready by 21 Action Planning Team participants spent several sessions looking at the stories behind the indicators, using a range of methods to deepen their understanding and insight. Specifically, they:

- Reviewed research on adolescent brain development.
- Examined best practices for transition-aged youth in Maryland and from other states.
- Used their own knowledge and expertise. Ready by 21 planning participants represented service providers, state and local government representatives, advocates, education, the business community and youth in transition.
- Interviewed more than100 youth who provided candid feedback about their current challenges and frustrations.
- Reviewed numerous recommendations made by various state task forces.
- Charged the Maryland Youth Council to explore why their peers may be disconnected and "not ready."

*If a teen is doing music or sports or academics, those are the cells and connections that will be hardwired. If they're lying on the couch or playing video games or MTV, those are the cells and connections that are going to survive.*

**– Giedd, FRONTLINE Interview, 2002**

*Advanced technologies in brain imaging have provided windows to the developing brain. Based on the pioneering work of Jay Giedd and colleagues at the National Institute of Mental Health, evidence is accumulating that the brain is not fully formed at puberty as earlier thought, but continues important maturation that is not complete until about age 24.*

*Understanding of adolescent brain development by parents, teachers, police and the general community is critical.*

**– Winters, 2004**

Discussing each indicator individually, the Ready by 21 Action Planning Team identified several different causes and forces at work. A picture quickly emerged – as seen in the chart below – a specific part of the "story behind" one indicator often related to another indicator as well. Looking at these overlapping areas of concern, the group identified barriers that could prevent a young person from making a smooth transition to adulthood. They found that, for the most part, these factors clustered into six areas, as seen in the final column of the chart.

| | Indicators | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| "The Story Behind" (contributing factors) | Educational Attainment | Employment | Health Care | HIV/AIDS | Arrest Rates | Death | Goal Areas |
| Low expectations, negative attitudes about youth, lack of concern | X | X | | | X | X | *Making the Case* |
| Lack of understanding of what it is like to be an adolescent, adolescent development and transitions to adulthood | X | | X | X | | | |
| Lack of family supports and knowledge of effective parenting | X | X | | | X | X | *Competent, Caring Adults* |
| Lack of connections and sense of respect for others | X | | | | | X | |
| Lack of competent, engaged adults | X | | | X | X | X | |
| Transience, high mobility | X | X | | | | | *Housing* |
| Lack of safe, stable housing | | X | | | | X | |
| Substance abuse | X | X | | X | X | X | *Access to Healthcare, especially Mental Health* |
| Limited availability and use of prevention, intervention and treatment for adolescents, especially mental health | | | X | X | | X | |
| Pressures to have sex | X | X | | X | | | |
| Insufficient preparation of youth for the workforce | X | X | | | | | *Pathways to Education and Employment* |
| Lack of connections between business and schools | X | X | | | | | |
| Lack of pathways to legitimate employment | | X | | X | X | | |
| Unjust criminalization of youth | X | | | | X | | *Equal Treatment* |

The contributing factors noted above are just a sampling of the many challenges identified by the Ready by 21 Action Planning members and the young people involved in the work. From root causes (such as poverty) to systems challenges (such as a lack of coordination among the multitude of efforts) to public understanding of youth psychology and challenges (such as the latest in adolescent brain research), the group worked to articulate the story so that they clearly identified specific solutions. Karen Pittman, Executive Director of the Forum for Youth Investment, explained they worked to "bring precision to their passion" for "changing the odds for youth."

## FROM GOALS TO ACTIONS

As noted, seven goal areas emerged from this intensive work. In short, they are: 1) making the case (for investing in transition-aged youth); 2) caring, competent adults; 3) safe, stable housing; 4) accessible, affordable healthcare; 5) pathways to education and employment; 6) equal treatment in the social service and juvenile justice systems; and 7.) accountability.

In each of these areas, the Ready by 21 Action Planning Team identified specific strategies and action steps. To maximize the potential that these collective strategies and actions would actually improve the odds for transition-aged youth, the group analyzed them through several lenses. Using Results Accountability, they asked first about whether the strategies and actions were likely to make a difference on the specific slate of indicators and if they would address the specific factors that were a part of the "story behind" the indicators. Also from Results Accountability, they challenged each individual strategy and action step against the following (Friedman, 2005):

- Specificity: Is the strategy specific enough to be implemented?
- Leverage: Does the strategy have the leverage to "turn the curve" on the indicators and to address the contributing factors? This may be based on research around best and promising practices; past performance, or reasonable expectations based on experience, other jurisdictions, similar programs, or approximate performance in other programs that are close to this strategy.
- Values: Does the strategy meet community, organizational, cultural and systems of care values? Does the strategy meet the principles of youth development and asset building?
- Reach: Is the strategy feasible and affordable?

*"Kids in DSS need to be told to dream big. I was told by my case worker not to go to Coppin State University but to go to community college because it's less expensive. I went to Coppin anyway."*

**– Focus Group Member, 2007**

The group also looked at the mix and balance of the proposed strategies and actions. Using the Forum's Ready by 21 Change Framework, they asked if the actions in each goal area were not only focused around a big picture vision for youth, but were they also a strategic balance of engaging stakeholders, improving quality, aligning policies, mobilizing demand, engaging youth and families, and ensuring shared accountability.

Finally, they asked if these strategies and actions were likely to address the needs of specific subpopulations of young people across the state of Maryland. The group designed goals, strategies and action steps that would address the needs of all youth and those who may have more intensive needs because they are in one or more of the following subpopulations: youth with disabilities; youth in the mental health system; youth in foster care; youth who are GLBTQ (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Transgender or Questioning); youth dealing with challenges caused by racial disparities; parenting teens; or teens in poverty. At various stages throughout this process, the group consulted with the broader network of administrators, providers and young people to further refine the proposed actions and identify existing work and recommendations that they could build upon. These current efforts and "moving trains" are highlighted in the following section.

## MARYLAND'S PROGRESS

***MOVING TRAINS***

*In Maryland, there are several different efforts underway to ensure that our youth are ready. The Forum for Youth Investment has noted that Ready by 21 initiatives achieve success when "moving trains" are connected and aligned around common goals. Such "moving trains" in Maryland include:*

***Governor's Interagency Council on Homelessness***

***Youth Investment Partnership***

***Adolescent Colloquium***

***Maryland Association of Prevention Professionals and Advocates***

***Governor's Workforce Investment Board – Challenged Populations Committee***

***Maryland Independent Living Youth Advisory Board***

***United Way of Central Maryland Youth Achieving Potential Impact Council***

***Statewide Community Planning on HIV Prevention***

***Partnership for a Safer Maryland (Injury Prevention)***

***Maryland State Drug and Alcohol Council***

***Maryland Youth Council***

***Maryland Youth MOVE***

***Local Management Boards***

***Local Workforce Investment Boards***

***Interagency Transition Council for Youth with Disabilities***

While there is concern that Maryland is missing the mark for our transitioning youth, there are many efforts that are working toward increasing the number of Maryland's young people that are ready. State and local governments, advocates, higher education, businesses and workforce development initiatives have been working hard to address the needs of this population, these groups have shown progress in the following ways:

- Strong gains have been made by local school systems in the percentage of students passing each of the four high school assessments (algebra, biology, English 2 and government) in the 2005-2006 school year. There has been an increase between 13.5 and 16.9 percentage points in the number of students passing, from 2002 to 2006 (Maryland Results for Child Well-Being, 2007).
- Maryland recently passed legislation (HB1309 2007 Session) which provides a tuition waiver program for youth who have resided in out-of-home placement in Maryland at the time of graduation from high school or completion of GED, or resided in out of home placement on their 14th birthday and were then adopted. Free tuition is provided for these students at all Maryland public colleges (two and four year).
- Governor O'Malley signed an *Executive Order 01.01.2007.13* creating the Governor's Interagency Transition Council for Youth with Disabilities that is tasked with ensuring effective interagency planning and delivery of services for secondary students with disabilities.
- Legislation was passed during the 2007 General Assembly session (SB175) that requires the Department of Juvenile Services to establish a statewide mentoring program. "Maryland Rising" will attempt to provide a volunteer mentor for each child who has spent at least 30 days in a committed placement.
- Maryland now has an established network of "One Stop Shop" workforce development centers, each supported by a Local Workforce Investment Board. There are numerous opportunities for youth offered through the "One Stop Shop" Centers including employment skill building and academic support.
- Maryland recently established through *Executive Order 01.01.2006.10* the Maryland Youth Council which is charged with advising the Children's Cabinet on issues related to the needs of youth in Maryland.
- Representatives from Maryland's Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, the Governor's Workforce Investment Board and several other partner agencies attended a United States Department of Labor (US DOL) Youth Forum with the intention of developing the framework for Maryland's strategic youth plan. The US DOL is encouraging states to crosswalk federal, state and locally funded programs and align investments to improve performance and outcomes for the neediest youth that were identified in facilitated group sessions.
- The National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices Issue Brief, *Retooling Career Technical Education*, cites Maryland as a "pioneer in developing a new vision for Career Technical Education" (2007).

# THE ACTION AGENDA

The Action Agenda that follows is organized around the seven goal areas and currently includes 35 strategies and 155 action steps. While no such document can ever capture all that needs to happen or reflect the complexity and connections inherent in the actual work, the Ready by 21 Action Planning Team offers up this agenda as, at the very least, a strong starting point for improving the odds for Maryland's transition-aged youth.

In order to implement this Action Agenda, it will be essential that partners work together. The intent of this work is not to build yet another "silo" but to join efforts throughout the state to change odds for transition-aged youth. To that end, partners will work to create a yearly implementation plan which will be based on this Action Agenda. The implementation plan will identify the responsible parties and timeline for each action step. In addition, a more exact identification of costs and funding sources will be identified as the work moves forward.

***SEVEN GOALS***

*1.* ***Making the Case*** *for investing in transition-aged youth*

*2.* ***Support of Caring, Competent Adults***

*3.* ***Safe, Stable Housing***

*4.* ***Accessible, Affordable Healthcare***

*5.* ***Pathways to Education and Employment***

*6.* ***Equal Treatment*** *in the social service and juvenile justice systems*

*7.* ***Accountability***

From the Action Agenda, the Ready by 21 Action team identified 12 strategies that seemed of highest or high priority. Specifically:

1. Create a communications strategy to educate parents and the public about the necessity and cost effectiveness of providing updated and continuing supports for youth. *(Highest Priority – from Goal #1 Making the Case)*
2. Provide all youth the support services necessary for the successful transition to further education, training and employment. *(Highest Priority – from Goal #5 Pathways to Education and Employment)*
3. Engage state decision makers in revising policy and practice to close gaps and improve the odds that youth will be ready by 21. *(from Goal #1 Making the Case)*
4. Support parents, guardians and other family members, including kinship care and foster care parents, to assist youth in the successful transition to adulthood. *(from Goal #2 Support of Competent, Caring Adults)*
5. Expand and enhance connections to capable, competent and caring advisors and advocates for all youth, especially disconnected youth. *(from Goal #2 Support of Competent, Caring Adults)*
6. Increase continuing education and professional development for those providing opportunities for youth. *(from Goal #2 Support of Competent, Caring Adults)*
7. Ensure that safe, supportive and affordable housing is accessible and available for youth transitioning from state care. *(from Goal #3 Safe, Stable Housing)*
8. Increase the number of supportive housing models for youth in the state. *(from Goal #3 Safe, Stable Housing)*
9. Explore the feasibility of ensuring that all older youth have health care coverage through the age of 24. *(from Goal #4 Accessible, Affordable Healthcare)*
10. Develop an integrated system of high quality prevention and treatment services and activities for all youth. *(from Goal #4 Accessible, Affordable Healthcare)*
11. Eliminate disparate treatment of youth who come into contact with criminal and delinquency systems. *(from Goal #6 Equal Treatment in Systems)*
12. Create a "Ready by 21 Leadership Team" as a permanent workgroup of the Maryland Children's Cabinet to oversee implementation of and accountability for the Ready by 21 Action Agenda. *(from Goal #7 Accountability)*

Each of the following action steps within the action agenda has been coded to reflect initial thinking on implementation costs and degree of difficulty. On some, costs are modest and difficulty is low. On others, significant investments and some heavy lifting will be required in order for the new approach to succeed. The coding system, like the design and layout of this Action Agenda, is borrowed with appreciation from the Achieving School Readiness Action Agenda.

The coding is as follows:

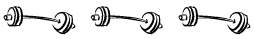
INVESTMENT OF FUNDS – THE STRATEGY REQUIRES:

| | |
|---|---|
| $ | no/low new funding |
| $$ | moderate new funding, including staff time to implement the strategy |
| $$$ | large investment of new funds, including implementation costs and staff time |

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY – THE STRATEGY REQUIRES:

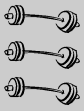
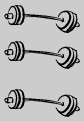
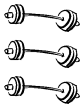
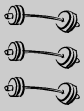
no change in how we work together toward implementation

moderate changes in how we work together

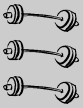
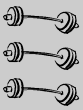
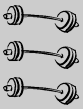
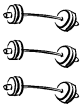
 significant new approaches to working together

The "HIGHEST" and "HIGH" priority items are also flagged in the pages that follow.

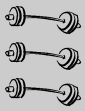
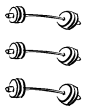
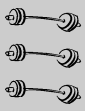
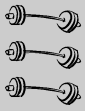
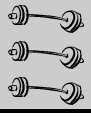
**GOAL #1: All Marylanders will understand the urgency of providing supportive services and resources, are aware of existing gaps, and are supportive of investments that will improve the odds for youth to be ready by 21.**

| Strategies | Action Steps | Level of Investment | Degree of Difficulty |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Engage state decision makers in revising policy and practice to close gaps and improve the odds that youth will be ready by 21.**<br><br>****HIGH PRIORITY**** | Examine adding a ninth result area – "All Youth Ready by 21" – to Maryland's child well-being result areas. | $ | |
| | Identify agency mandates and responsibilities for measurable youth results. | $ | |
| | Compile data that is specific to the outcomes of older youth for whom the agency has responsibility. | $ | |
| | Formulate specific requests targeted at improving results for youth. | $ | |
| | Identify and enlist those that will carry the requests to state decision makers. | $ | |
| **Enlist stakeholders and providers in understanding, improving and advocating to improve the odds that youth will be ready by 21.** | Create a relevant cross-sector team, the Ready by 21 Leadership Team, to educate direct service providers and stakeholders on the social and developmental factors that affect the ability of youth to be ready by 21. | $ | |
| | Collaborate with the Adolescent Colloquium. Develop a training for providers, who work with youth 14-24, which incorporates youth development principles with the updated information on healthy adolescent development (e.g., return on investment, brain research, youth as resources and contributors, current and historic funding available for youth). | $ $ $ |  |
| **Create a communications strategy to educate parents and the public about the necessity and cost effectiveness of providing updated and continuing supports for youth.**<br><br>****HIGHEST PRIORITY**** | Identify champions for the youth in the executive office, legislators, businesses, faith groups, and higher education. | $ | |
| | Develop a communications plan that is coordinated with the Youth Voice Campaign (see below) and that will expertly craft and frame targeted messages that resonate with parents and the public on their interest in investing in youth. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Target specific audiences and use appropriate spokespersons and media to reach them. Team will fully implement communications plan. | $ $ $ |  |
| **Engage youth voices in efforts to expand public knowledge about the need for readiness by age 21.** | The Maryland Youth Council and other youth advisory groups will create a Youth Voice Workgroup. Local Management Boards and others will identify youth and engage them in the process. | $ | |
| | In coordination with the Leadership Team, the Youth Voice Workgroup will determine which stakeholders to target. | $ | |
| | In coordination with the Leadership Team, the Youth Voice Workgroup will develop a Youth Voice Campaign that showcases youth voices making the case to the public and key stakeholders for more and better supports. | $ $ |  |
| | The Youth Voice Workgroup will enlist educational attainment programs in involving students in the Youth Voice Campaign. They will explore options such as a youth speakers bureau. | $ $ | |
| | The Youth Council will research and draft a Youth Bill of Rights with recommendations on how to alter or improve those rights. The Youth Voice Workgroup will promote the Youth Bill of Rights. | $ | |

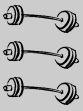
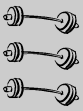
**GOAL #2: All Maryland's youth, especially older youth (14+), will have the support of capable, competent and caring adults.**

| Strategies | Action Steps | Level of Investment | Degree of Difficulty |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Support parents, guardians and other family members, including kinship care and foster care parents, to assist youth in the successful transition to adulthood.**<br><br>****HIGH PRIORITY**** | Explore expanding supports for parents/guardians "where they are" (e.g., in the workplace) and provide parenting support programs across the state for parents of older youth. | $ $ $ | |
| | Build on existing efforts to provide parents with printed materials on parenting adolescents (particularly information on college, behavior, independence). | $ $ | |
| | Work to develop and disseminate information to help parents understand adolescent brain development and social development. | $ $ | |
| **Expand and enhance connections to capable, competent and caring advisors and advocates for all youth, especially disconnected youth.**<br><br>****HIGH PRIORITY**** | Research and review available programs that connect vulnerable older youth transitioning out of the child serving system with natural supports (e.g., Family Finding program). | $ $ | |
| | Develop a plan to work with state agencies to ensure adults working within the system of care for disconnected youth are competent, capable and caring. | $ $ |  |
| | Explore supporting the state to ensure all kinship care and foster care parents are provided with quality training regarding adolescent development and life skills. | $ $ $ | |
| | Expand efforts to reconnect youth through a network of targeted services and opportunities (e.g., Youth Opportunity! (YO!) Centers) by gathering data and information on availability and accessibility of YO! type programs. Ensure the programs have the capacity to provide adult advocates for needy youth. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Local Management Boards will ensure that youth have knowledge of and access to a hotline, information and resources specific to older youth. Discuss the feasibility of creating a local media campaign through youth-centered media to publicize these resources. | $ $ $ | |
| **Coordinate and expand existing Maryland mentoring initiatives as well as other efforts dedicated to connecting young people in high school and beyond with advisors and advocates and life coaches.** | Map the current needs and the range of possible connections- formal and informal- to caring, capable and competent adults for older youth in order to strengthen and maximize these connections. | $ $ |  |
| | The Governor's Office for Children and Local Management Boards, in coordination with existing statewide initiatives (such as the Maryland Mentoring Partnership and The After School Institute), will conduct a statewide assessment of current State- and local-level initiatives dedicated to increasing the number of adults connecting with older youth as mentors, advisors, advocates and life coaches. | $ $ | |
| | The Maryland Mentoring Partnership and The After School Institute will continue to work to evaluate and improve quality and best practices in mentoring and life coaching for older youth (making clear distinctions about the differences between what is attractive to younger youth and older youth). | $ $ | |
| | Discuss the feasibility of securing public and private (local, state and federal) funding to expand quality mentoring and advising programs for Maryland's older youth, with an emphasis on youth transitioning out of the state's child-serving system. | $ $ $ |  |

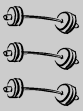
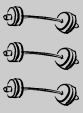
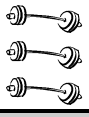
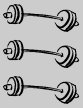
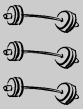
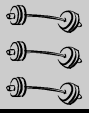
**GOAL #2: All Maryland's youth, especially older youth (14+), will have the support of capable, competent and caring adults.**

| Strategies | Action Steps | Level of Investment | Degree of Difficulty |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***Continuation of . . .***<br><br>**Coordinate and expand existing Maryland mentoring initiatives as well as other efforts dedicated to connecting young people in high school and beyond with advisors and advocates and life coaches.** | Explore including high quality mentoring, advising and life coaching for older youth in the following areas: youth development and workforce preparation programs, educational institutions and workplaces. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Coordinate with all youth-serving agencies, advocates, citizen groups, legislators and other interested persons to pass legislation to establish a consistent pool of quality mentors, advisors and advocates (building on the intent of SB 621 (2007)- State Personnel Compensatory Time for Mentoring Youth). | $ $ $ | |
| | Discuss increasing the number of peer-to-peer and cross-age mentoring initiatives by assessing the current number of such initiatives and identifying promising practices in peer-to-peer and cross-age mentoring. | $ | |
| | Reach out to the Governor's Office for Community Initiatives as a way to tap into the faith community for mentors and for networks of connection and as needed for older youth. | $ | |
| **Increase number of positive activities that are attractive for older youth.** | Maryland Out of School Time Network will ensure already existing out-of-school, recreational and other efforts (e.g., "After School Matters") focus on increasing positive, attractive activities for older youth by obtaining youth input into what is attractive to youth, ensuring youth participation on the network, and researching best practices across the nation. | $ $ | |
| | Maryland Out of School Time Network will explore identifying resources (youth input, promising practices, volunteers, etc) to increase out-of-school time activities that would attract older youth through schools, recreation councils and community-based programs. | $ $ | |
| | Maryland Out of School Time Network will explore the feasibility of creating a state funding source to run quality out-of-school time community-based programs for older youth. | $ $ $ | |
| | Discuss expanding and enhancing The After School Institute (TASI) database on activities. Look into linking TASI to the Local Management Boards' Single Points of Access. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Explore the feasibility of expanding and increasing the number of out of school time and community based activities designed by and for older youth. | $ $ $ |  |
| **Increase continuing education and professional development for those providing opportunities for youth.**<br><br>****HIGH PRIORITY**** | Consider developing and expanding staff development training to all Youth Worker providers. | $ $ $ | |
| | Develop a two-level certification program for all people who consistently engage young people, including parents, foster parents, teachers, probation agents, police officers, mentors, counselors, job corps employees, social workers, and businesses that employ primarily older youth. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Explore current continuing education Youth Worker/Youth Development opportunities. | $ | |
| | Look into establishing an interagency web-based information sharing system that provides resources and information for youth workers. | $ $ $ |  |

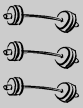
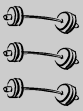
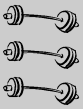
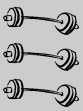
**GOAL #3: All Maryland's transition-aged youth, with an emphasis on youth transitioning out of public systems, will have access to safe and affordable housing that is convenient to services, supports, transportation, schools, employment and other youth.**

| Strategies | Action Steps | Level of Investment | Degree of Difficulty |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Ensure that safe, supportive and affordable housing is accessible and available for youth in and transitioning from state care.**<br><br>****HIGH PRIORITY**** | Utilize geo mapping to assess the location of youth in residential resources in comparison to their home jurisdiction. | $ | |
| | Explore the feasibility of expanding Local Access Mechanisms to ensure referrals and resources for youth up to age 21. | $ $ | |
| | Identify the number of youth ages 16-21 leaving state care and assess what housing options and support services are currently being made available to them, identify gaps and develop recommendations. Include this information in the State Resource Plan. | $ | |
| | Launch an information sharing campaign that convenes state agencies and ensures information is provided regarding housing resources for transition-aged youth. | $ $ | |
| | Ensure that state and local housing agencies are educated on supportive housing models for youth. | $ $ | |
| | Explore maximizing Chaffee funds and any other "trust" funds to support deposit/first month housing costs. | $ | |
| | Identify obstacles to private landlords renting to young people and develop strategies for overcoming those obstacles. Consider the following: 1) issues in renting to 16-17 year olds as well as renting to 18-24 year olds; 2) barriers of criminal backgrounds for young people trying to turn their lives around; and 3) strategies such as co-signing and/or subsidies for beginning years of renting if young people are in a program and supported by caring, competent and consistent adults. | $ $ | |
| | Research how to potentially provide legal mechanisms to allow 16 and 17 year olds to rent their own apartments. Explore laws and regulations in other states and consider the feasibility of developing a similar law/regulation for the state. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Emphasize discharge and permanency planning, which will include strategies to help youth reconnect or remain connected to familial, informal, and community resources, including forming healthy relationships as adult children and reconnecting with estranged kin. | $ $ $ | |
| **Federal, state and local housing policies should encourage the development and operations of housing for families and transitioning youth.** | Work with Department of Housing and Community Development to identify federal, state and local housing policies and regulations that discourage the development or operations of housing for youth in transition. Work with low income and affordable housing advocates to influence federal and state policymakers on this agenda. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Develop a campaign using personal stories of housing struggles and 'holes' in the system. | $ $ | |
| **Increase the number of supportive housing models for youth in the state.** | Provide information and research on best practices, including research from the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH). Encourage Department of Housing and Community Development to ask CSH to conduct a special briefing for them and provide consultation on models for housing transitioning youth. | $ $ | |
| ****HIGH PRIORITY**** | Advocates will identify affordable, entry-level housing models in Maryland using best practices. | $ | |

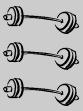
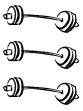
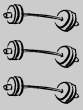
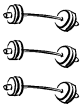
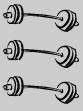
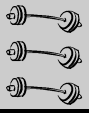
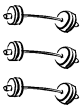
**GOAL #3: All Maryland's transition-aged youth, with an emphasis on youth transitioning out of public systems, will have access to safe and affordable housing that is convenient to services, supports, transportation, schools, employment and other youth.**

| Strategies | Action Steps | Level of Investment | Degree of Difficulty |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***Continuation of . . .***<br><br>**Increase the number of supportive housing models for youth in the State.**<br><br>****HIGH PRIORITY**** | Educate state and local housing agencies on best practices regarding supportive housing models for entry-level workers, including young people. Work with agencies to develop and implement effective models for Maryland. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Educate service system providers on providing quality housing for entry-level workers, including young people. Work with providers to develop and implement effective models for Maryland. | $ $ |  |
| | Work to identify current Federal, State and local resources that can be used to develop and operate supportive housing for youth. Link providers to these resources. | $ $ |  |
| | Encourage Community Development Corporations to build safe, supportive, affordable young adult housing (e.g., converting a hotel to young adult housing). | $ $ $ |  |
| **Prepare disconnected young adults to find, get and keep housing (based on Annie E. Casey Foundation family program model).** | Discuss expanding training in best practices in housing preparation to providers working with transition aged youth. | $ $ $ | |
| | Increase life skills education programs in schools including housing education. | $ $ | |
| | Explore, identify and implement outreach, re-entry/re-connection strategies. | $ $ |  |
| **Increase young people's access to affordable and conventional housing.** | Explore increasing housing stock available to youth by Habitat for Youth concept (Youth Build). | $ | |
| | Encourage nonprofits to provide young people access to housing by co-signing for young people, providing supports that encourage landlords to rent to young people in the programs, and providing funding streams for security deposits and rent subsidies. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Consider working with advocates to develop a model to fund and support additional affordable entry-level workforce housing for young workers that is both safe and affordable. Consider engaging in an advocacy campaign geared toward legislators to ensure that the funding exists to support older youth and young adults in securing safe and affordable entry-level workforce housing. | $ $ $ | |
| | Identify and increase the amount of federal and private dollars, in order to increase the number of housing options available to young people. | $ $ |  |
| **Encourage families in providing safe, supportive housing to older youth.** | Work with other strategies that are encouraging parents/families to maintain commitments to their older children to emphasize housing as an important support. | $ | |
| | Study whether family subsidies offered to support a young person aged 16-21 could be less expensive and disruptive than foster care or subsidized apartments. Examine whether any states have such policies in place. | $ | |
| | Pursue research to develop a standard for Maryland to support subsidy programming. | $ | |

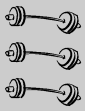
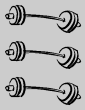
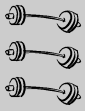
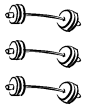
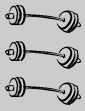
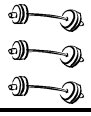
**GOAL #4: All Maryland's youth, especially transition-aged youth, will receive necessary supports to ensure health and well being.**

| Strategies | Action Steps | Level of Investment | Degree of Difficulty |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Older youth, particularly vulnerable youth in transition, will access health and health related services and benefits for which they are eligible.** | Explore the feasibility of ensuring that every youth in the care of the state receives services for which they are eligible in a timely manner. | $ $ $ | |
| | Ensure information is provided to all transition age youth regarding health and health related services. | $ $ |  |
| | Create multiple opportunities for older youth to access services in a timely manner including accessible and welcoming health centers, hotlines, etc. | $ $ $ | |
| | Consider providing a referral network of providers through the Local Access Mechanisms, coordinated through the Local Management Boards. | $ $ | |
| | Ensure interagency planning for transition-aged youth that identifies needs and gaps in local continuum of care. | $ $ | |
| | Work with the School-Based Health Center Policy Advisory Council and the Maryland Assembly of School Based Health Care to advocate for expanding School-Based Health and Mental Health Services in both regular and alternative schools. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Explore the cost of expanding school based health centers, and developing community schools and full service schools for the purpose of expanding services to older youth including the options of designating school-based health centers as community health centers. | $ $ $ | |
| | Research the possibility of enhancing substance abuse treatment on demand for transition-aged youth through the State Drug and Alcohol and Local Drug and Alcohol Councils. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Explore options for designating school-based health centers as community-based health centers. | $ $ $ | |
| | Convene health focused youth organizations, through the Maryland Youth Council, to do outreach and advocacy around access to health and health-related services. | $ $ $ | |
| | Explore the feasibility of ensuring health support services are available and accessible to pregnant and parenting teens. | $ $ $ | |
| **Explore the feasibility of ensuring that all older youth have health care coverage through the age of 24.**<br><br>****HIGH PRIORITY**** | Consider the feasibility of focusing on ensuring health services for transition aged youth. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Work to align the definition of transition-aged youth across state agencies and to raise the transition age to 24. | $ $ | |

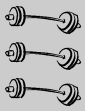
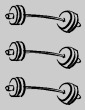
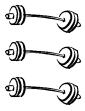
**GOAL #4: All Maryland's youth, especially transition-aged youth, will receive necessary supports to ensure health and well being.**

| Strategies | Action Steps | Level of Investment | Degree of Difficulty |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***Continuation of . . .***<br><br>**Explore the feasibility of ensuring that all older youth have health care coverage through the age of 24.**<br><br>****HIGH PRIORITY**** | Work with the Maryland Health Care Commission, who is required to study the high rate of uninsurance among young adults (HB 1057 [2007]) ages 19 to 29, and recommend ways to increase health care coverage. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Explore the feasibility of allowing low-income youth to qualify for Medicaid until age 24. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Explore the feasibility of possibly expanding the Maryland Children's Health Insurance Program programs to cover youth to age 24, using a sliding scale fee. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Work to enact legislation that requires insurers to allow parents the option of extending coverage of their children up to age 24. | $ $ $ |  |
| | The Youth Council, in concert with YOUTH MOVE, will utilize youth voices, and school and community representatives/leaders to advocate for access to health and health-related services. | $ |  |
| | Work to discuss with community colleges the possibility of expanding coverage available for full and part-time students. | $ $ $ | |
| | Explore opportunities through associations, employers and other groups to provide health coverage for youth. | $ $ $ |  |
| **Develop an integrated system of high quality prevention and treatment services and activities for all youth.**<br><br>****HIGH PRIORITY**** | Support the Baltimore Safe and Sound Campaign to Expand "More for Maryland" Opportunity Compact. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Maryland Association of Prevention Professionals and Advocates will educate policy/ decision makers on the importance of investing in evidence-based programs and programs that can demonstrate a positive impact on youth. | $ | |
| | Service providers (mental health workers, teachers, health providers, DSS workers, DJS workers, etc) providing services to transition-aged youth will receive information and professional development on youth development communication skills, best practices and locally available resources. Work with the Maryland Youth Council. | $ $ $ | |
| | Work to ensure that there is a comprehensive prevention plan for the state. | $ | |
| | The Maryland Youth Council will engage young people in outreach and advocacy as well as delivery of quality prevention and treatment approaches. Involve youth organizing groups from high schools, colleges and community organizations. | $ $ | |

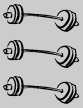
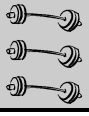
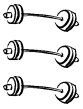
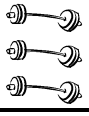
**GOAL #4: All Maryland's youth, especially transition-aged youth, will receive necessary supports to ensure health and well being.**

| Strategies | Action Steps | Level of Investment | Degree of Difficulty |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Enhance and expand HIV/AIDS and STD prevention efforts for all youth, especially vulnerable transition-aged youth**. | Ensure HIV/AIDS and sexual education curriculum are offered and based on best practices. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Gather information on current HIV/STD outreach efforts targeting transition-aged youth, especially drug users and prostitutes. | $ | |
| | Support efforts to expand STD/HIV prevention efforts of programs in the state who serve children, youth and families. | $ $ $ | |
| | Maryland Youth Council will support HIV/AIDS youth leadership organizations to advocate for enhanced HIV prevention efforts. | $ | |
| **Increase efforts to reduce illegal substance use and underage binge drinking, especially among vulnerable transition age youth.** | Support current efforts at the college and community level to enforce underage drinking laws. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Continue to support local underage drinking prevention coalitions in their efforts to work with local businesses and law enforcement to enforce underage drinking laws. | $ $ | |
| | Continue to encourage consequences at the local level for parents/adults who purchase alcohol for youth underage. | $ $ |  |
| | Work to implement alcohol and drug abuse prevention activities designed for college students. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Explore how to improve communities ability to provide prosocial, developmentally appropriate opportunities for older youth. | $ $ $ |  |
| | The Youth Council will work with and support substance abuse prevention youth leadership efforts in the State. | $ |  |

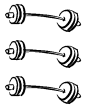
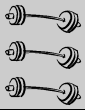
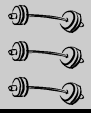
**GOAL #5: All Maryland's youth, with an emphasis on vulnerable youth, will be prepared to successfully transition into post-secondary education, advanced training and the workforce.**

| Strategies | Action Steps | Level of Investment | Degree of Difficulty |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Provide all youth with a career plan that articulates their goals and documents the pathways to the necessary education, training and employment to achieve those goals.** | Ensure all students have a career development plan by the time they enter high school and that this plan will be updated annually (per COMAR). | $ $ $ |  |
| | Work with state and local partner agencies (e.g., the Career Development Council) to fully implement the Maryland Career Development Framework by: a) strengthening the capacity of the local school systems to guarantee that all standards of the Framework are met with an emphasis on those outlined for grades 9-12th and post-secondary; b) providing training for counselors, teachers, families/parents, service providers and related partners on the use of the framework; c) a more systematic matching of students as young as middle school to caring, competent adults that can sit down with them and discuss careers either individually or in small groups; and d) building and updating an inventory of resources and disseminating the information. | $ $ $ | |
| | Report the successful implementation of the Maryland Career Development Framework. | $ | |
| | Discuss the feasibility of ensuring that the agencies use the Maryland Career Development Framework and partner with other agencies. | $ $ | |
| **Align secondary, post-secondary and out-of-school youth programs and ensure that these lead to relevant careers as defined in the Maryland Career Cluster Framework.** | Provide data on high skill level, high wage, high demand occupations to local school systems, students, and parents/families to make informed choices about careers in the state. | $ | |
| | Identify additional funding sources to assist the Local Workforce Investment Boards in providing comprehensive services to support disconnected older youth. | $ $ $ | |
| | Explore the feasibility of providing technical support to the local school systems to expand access to Career and Technology Education programs to all students to ensure their readiness for college and careers. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Foster the civic engagement of business and industry leaders (including the Maryland Business Round Table for Education and the Chamber of Commerce) to connect with middle and high schools to ensure that students understand the connection between school and work, have opportunities to connect to Maryland industries through jobs and internships, and will benefit from business supported preparation programs connected to current and future business needs. | $ $ |  |
| | Ensure appropriate services and opportunities, and encourage re-entry into high school. | $ $ $ | |
| | Ensure sufficient resources to provide transitional, educational and/or employment services, coordinated through the Local Workforce Investment Boards, to the estimated population of out-of-school youth through Job Corps, local community based organizations and other organizations. | $ $ $ | |
| | Ensure youth in state care have appropriate education and employment opportunities. | $ $ $ | |

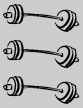
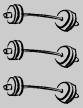
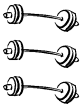
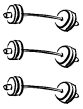
**GOAL #5: All Maryland's youth, with an emphasis on vulnerable youth, will be prepared to successfully transition into post-secondary education, advanced training and the workforce.**

| Strategies | Action Steps | Level of Investment | Degree of Difficulty |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Continuation of . . .**<br><br>**Align secondary, post-secondary and out-of-school youth programs and ensure that these lead to relevant careers as defined in the Maryland Career Cluster** | Work with state institutions of higher education to identify and implement effective support services to significantly increase the retention and matriculation of students. | $ $ $ | |
| | Children's Cabinet could consider partnering with the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation and the Governor's Workforce Investment Board. | $ | |
| **Provide opportunities for all youth to develop the academic, social, career and technical skills and experiences necessary to be successful in education, work and life.** | Consider providing academic instruction that integrates the Maryland State Department of Education's *Skills for Success* into all programs so that all youth know and are able to demonstrate appropriate business behaviors. Coordinate with business and non-profit organizations to provide multiple opportunities for career exploration work experience and service (through summer programs, work release, internships, etc.) throughout students' academic careers. | $ $ | |
| | Identify networks of non-profit and community-based organizations that provide supports to youth, and create plans to increase their capacity to do outreach and provide social, recreational, transitional and other services, especially to older and out-of-school youth. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Expand opportunities for students to engage in experiential learning, as a part of the educational experience. | $ $ $ | |
| | Explore the feasibility of providing incentives to community rehabilitation agencies to move young adults into competitive employment. | $ $ $ |  |
| **Provide all youth the support services necessary for the successful transition to further education, training and employment.**<br><br>****HIGHEST PRIORITY**** | Ensure the feasibility that youth have access to the supportive services they need to be successful in the workplace at low or no cost. These may include, but are not limited to the following: job search assistance, career exploration and decision-making, transportation, mentoring/job coaching, housing, child-care, mental heath counseling, health care and substance abuse prevention and treatment. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Encourage schools to make referrals for youth dropping out of school directly to the local workforce investment areas and their One Stop Centers for transitional services and eventual re-entry into high school if at all possible. | $ $ | |
| | Encourage local schools to ensure appropriate referrals will be made to local One Stop Centers for youth needing job search assistance. | $ | |
| | Consider adopting the unique "student youth" identifier created by Maryland State Department of Education for each youth in Maryland. | $ | |
| | Work to ensure all pregnant and parenting teens in Maryland are provided the necessary supports to receive their high school diploma and continue on to further education, training and employment. | $ $ $ |  |

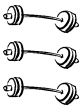
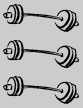
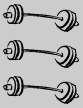
## GOAL #6: Maryland's social service and juvenile justice systems will treat all young people equally and fairly.

| Strategies | Action Steps | Level of Investment | Degree of Difficulty |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Eliminate disparate treatment of youth who come into contact with criminal and delinquency systems.**<br><br>****HIGH PRIORITY**** | Work to build on the strategy, focusing on areas that have a disparate impact on youth based on race, class, ethnicity, mental health, sexual orientation and gender. | $ $ $ | |
| | Work with the Juvenile Council to review the Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) studies and resulting recommendations. Identify best practices as demonstrated on national and state levels. | $ | |
| | Increase training and outreach for youth workers regarding unique characteristics they may encounter. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Implement best practices through professional development and training, internal review processes and the establishment and use of performance measures. | $ $ $ |  |
| **Provide services to youth with behavioral problems without entry into the delinquency system.** | Research alternatives and effective strategies for identifying and addressing youths' behavioral problems that are not fully addressed or that are outside of the purview of CINA and juvenile justice systems (e.g., runaways, prostitution, truancy). Will include research on examples from other states. | $ | |
| | Convene conference with appropriate stakeholders to examine the issues in a limited amount of time and develop consensus on solutions and action steps. | $ $ $ | |
| **Explore amending child in need of assistance (CINA) laws/ regulations to expand services for former foster youth and their families and to permit access to child welfare benefits to age 24 if necessary to achieve economic and social stability.** | Survey child welfare laws and literature to develop specific legislation to extend access to child welfare benefits to youth who leave the foster care system before 21, but need to reenter it, or youth who remain in foster care to age 21 but who have not achieved economic and social stability and who do not have familial or other resources to achieve such stability on their own. | $ $ $ | |
| | Consider convening a conference with appropriate stakeholders to examine issues in a limited amount of time and develop consensus for such legislation. | $ $ | |
| | Consider a strategy for creating public and governmental consensus for such legislation and for the funding needed to implement legislation | $ $ $ | |
| | Consider exploring legislation and developing accompanying lobbying materials and campaigns for passage of statutory and budget changes. | $ $ $ |  |

**GOAL #7: Maryland will have an infrastructure that promotes, sufficiently funds and is held accountable for the preparedness of transition-aged youth for college, work and life.**

| Strategies | Action Steps | Level of Investment | Degree of Difficulty |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Create a "Ready by 21 Leadership Team" as a permanent workgroup of the Maryland Children's Cabinet to oversee implementation of and accountability for the Ready by 21 Action Agenda.**<br><br>****HIGH PRIORITY**** | Research models for this workgroup by looking at examples from other states. | $ | |
| | Develop a set of roles and responsibilities for the workgroup, as well as a staffing structure. | $ $ $ | |
| | Develop an implementation plan for the goals, strategies and action steps outlined in the Ready by 21 Action Agenda and monitor the implementation of this plan. | $ $ $ | |
| **Craft a data development agenda that will reflect the well-being of youth in transition throughout the state.** | Initiate and maintain research partnerships with local school systems, community colleges and other community resource groups. | $ $ | |
| | Create a youth survey and a community survey, and develop a plan for implementation, including designation of survey coordinators. | $ $ $ | |
| | Work with those implementing 2007 Senate Bill 9 to ensure student surveys are comprehensive. | $ $ $ |  |
| **Develop institutionalized funding streams to support goal action steps.** | Influence the Commission on Fiscal Structure to include youth in transition as part of its focus, recommending new sources of revenue for program and staff support. | $ $ $ | |
| | Introduce and pass legislation to expand tax credit system for those who contribute to the education, employment, health and housing needs of youth in transition. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Identify existing funding streams and highlight ways that those can be used to support youth in transition (i.e., TANF, 21st Century Learning Centers, housing grants). | $ $ $ | |
| **Assure accountability and integrity in the implementation of this Ready by 21 Action Agenda through ongoing oversight and evaluation.** | Consider advocating for a more in-depth and substantive joint budget hearing on preparing transition-aged youth for college, work and life. | $ |  |
| | Discuss providing training and technical assistance to local providers to implement results accountability, decision-making and budgeting. | $ $ | |
| | Look into developing performance measures to ensure positive youth outcomes. | $ $ $ |  |
| | Explore the possibility of establishing mechanisms to collect necessary data. | $ $ $ | |
| | Utilize surveys and other evaluation tools to determine success of collaborative youth in transition activities. | $ $ | |

**GOAL #7: Maryland will have an infrastructure that promotes, sufficiently funds and is held accountable for the preparedness of transition-aged youth for college, work and life.**

| Strategies | Action Steps | Level of Investment | Degree of Difficulty |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Develop five-year local Ready by 21 plans that address the specific needs within the Local Management Boards' jurisdictions.** | Establish Ready by 21 planning teams convened by the Local Management Boards to develop the five-year plan for each jurisdictions. | $ $ | |
| | Ensure that there is coordination between the plans from each Local Management Board area. | $ $ |  |
| | Monitor the implementation of the plans and evaluate progress in achieving gains on the six indicators. | $ | |
| **Strengthen existing accountability mechanisms within public systems, particularly the link between statewide standards and local implementation.** | Review existing standards and accountability mechanisms and determine whether they align with the Ready by 21 objectives and best practices, including the incorporation of Ready by 21 as a ninth result area in Maryland's Child Well-Being Result Areas. | $ |  |
| | Consider utilizing research and national and state models to develop a framework for personnel policies and standards necessary for successful outcomes for youth, with specific consideration of strengthening training, setting appropriate workloads, measuring and utilizing customer satisfaction and disciplinary policies for professionals harming youth. | $ $ $ | |
| | Explore the feasibility of developing a comprehensive database of Maryland personnel policies for individuals and agencies serving youth. Consider comparing current policies against those necessary for successful outcomes. | $ $ $ |  |

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Children's Cabinet**
The Children's Cabinet coordinates the child and family focused service delivery system by emphasizing prevention, early intervention, and community-based services for all children and families. The Children's Cabinet includes the Secretaries from the Departments of Budget and Management, Disabilities, Health and Mental Hygiene, Human Resources, and Juvenile Services, as well as the State Superintendent of Schools for Maryland State Department of Education. The Executive Director of the Governor's Office for Children chairs the Children's Cabinet. More specifically, the Children's Cabinet is comprised of:

- **Catherine J. Motz, Interim Executive Director**, Governor's Office for Children
- **T. Eloise Foster, Secretary**, Department of Budget & Management
- **Catherine Raggio, Secretary**, Department of Disabilities
- **John Colmers, Secretary**, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
- **Brenda Donald, Secretary**, Department of Human Resources
- **Donald W. DeVore, Secretary**, Department of Juvenile Services
- **Nancy S. Grasmick, State Superintendent of Schools**, Maryland State Department of Education

**Forum for Youth Investment's Ready by 21™ Big Picture Approach**
The Forum for Youth Investment (the Forum) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to helping communities and the nation make sure all young people are Ready by 21™ – ready for college, work and life. This goal requires that young people have the supports, opportunities and services needed to prosper and contribute where they live, learn, work, play and make a difference. The Forum provides youth and adult leaders with information, technical assistance, training, network support and partnership. Ready by 21 is being used be a growing number of coalitions and planning bodies across the country who are committed to taking a Big Picture Approach to planning and policy development. This Big Picture Approach is youth-centered, research-based and outcomes-focused. Ready by 21 is a trademark of the Forum.

**Governor's Office for Children**
The Governor's Office for Children (GOC) coordinates child and family-oriented care within the Maryland's child-serving agencies by emphasizing prevention, early intervention and community-based services for all children and families. The office leads the development of a Three-Year Children's Plan establishing goals and strategies for delivery of integrated services to children and families. GOC works to promote the well-being of children by collaborating with Local Management Boards, expanding State Children Youth and Families Information System (SCYFIS), and developing and implementing Integrated Systems of Care.

**Leadership in Action Program**
The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Leadership in Action Program (LAP) is a results-based leadership development project designed to build the capacity of high- and mid-level public agency leaders and their community partners. LAP builds on the capacity of leaders to accelerate measurable improvements in the well-being of families, children and communities.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS (CONTINUED)

**Local Management Boards**
Local Management Boards (LMBs) serve as the coordinators of collaboration for child and family services throughout Maryland. They bring together local child-serving agencies, local child providers, clients of services, families, and other community representatives to empower local stakeholders in addressing the needs of and setting priorities for their communities. There is an LMB in each county and in Baltimore City.

**Local Workforce Investment Boards**
There are twelve local workforce areas in Maryland, each supported by a Local Workforce Investment Board (LWIB). The LWIBs are guided and led by the private industry in the area to meet the current and future hiring needs of today's employer community. As an integral component of their community, the LWIBs recognize the skill shortages of their areas and foster relationships with the workers and employers. The LWIBs build connections between workforce development and economic development by serving as a vehicle for identifying needs and developing and ensuring implementation of an effective workforce strategy opportunities needed to increase the quality and quantity of youth investment and youth involvement.

**Maryland State Resource Plan**
The Maryland State Resource Plan is intended to encompass all out-of-home placements including the requirements of HB813. The primary focus of HB813 is on developing a plan for residential child care programs, which is a term used by COMAR to define many of the out-of-home placements available in the state. For a copy of the plan, please visit the Governor's Office for Children's website at www.goc.state.md.us.

**National Governor's Association**
The National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices is the nation's only dedicated consulting firm for governors and their key policy staff. The center's mission is to develop and implement innovative solutions to public policy challenges.

**Partnership for 21st Century Skills**
The Partnership for 21st Century Skills serves as a catalyst to position 21st century skills at the center of the United States K-12 education by building collaborative partnerships among education, business, community and government leaders. The Partnership for 21st Century Skills has developed a unified, collective visions for 21st century learning that can be used to strengthen American education. For more information, please visit www.21stcenturyskills.org.

**Results Accountability**
Results Accountability (RA) is a disciplined way of thinking and taking action that can improve the lives of children, families and communities as a whole. RA starts with the ends and works backwards step by step to the means. For communities, the ends are conditions of well being for children, families and the community as a whole. For programs, the ends are how customers are better off when the program works the way it should.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS (CONTINUED)

**Maryland Youth Council**

In order to ensure youth are given the opportunity to provide feedback regarding youth centered public policies, *Executive Order 01.01.2006.10* was established creating the Maryland Youth Council. The Governor's Office for Children, on behalf of the Children's Cabinet, has convened more than 20 youth leaders representing community based youth groups and organizations from around the state. Because it is difficult to create and design youth centered public policies and programs without the voice of youth, the Youth Council has been established to encourage young people throughout the State to consider how government, working with public and private sector partners, can create positive outcomes for Maryland's youth. The Council is made up of the following members:

**Abby Sherrard**
Garrett County

**Andy Coates**
Baltimore County

**Azam Ansari**
Montgomery County

**Brittany Goings-Davis**
Howard County

**Christopher Bohle**
Anne Arundel County

**Christopher Tomlinson**
Charles County

**Dominique Kunciw**
Worcester County

**Krystal Ray**
Baltimore County

**Jackie Wengel**
Worcester County

**Jalecia King**
St. Mary's County

**Jaron Byrd**
Prince George's County

**Jaquit Byrd**
Prince George's County

**John Scott**
Prince George's County

**LaToya Coverdale**
Dorchester County

**Lindsay McAndrew**
Queen Anne's County

**Matthew Redmond**
Baltimore City

**Meladeh Rabie**
Charles County

**Nikki Duong**
Montgomery County

**Sara Fisher**
Anne Arundel County

**Peter Bachman**
Harford County

**Richard Robinson**
Baltimore City

**Sache Jones**
Baltimore City

**Sarah Porter**
Caroline County

**Shalita Robinson**
Prince George's County

**Shakeara Lynch**
Baltimore County

**Sophia Morgan Reaves**
Montgomery County

**Stephen Nytrai**
Harford County

**Thomas Senecal**
Prince George's County

**Trinity Sheppard**
Frederick County

**Tommy Murray**
Worcester County

**For copies of the *Youth Ready by 21: A Five-Year Action Agenda for Maryland*, please visit the Governor's Office for Children's website at www.goc.state.md.us!**

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